

Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 2009 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Menopause occurs when a woman has been period-free for one year, which is not related to being ill, pregnant, breastfeeding, or using certain medications.¹ To relieve the symptoms of menopause, physicians may prescribe hormone replacement therapy (HRT), which previously was also hypothesized to reduce heart disease, osteoporosis, and cancer.¹ However, evidence from randomized trials published in 2002 demonstrated the adverse effects of HRT on cardiovascular health and an increase in the risk of other diseases.² As a result, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommended against the routine use of combined estrogen and progestin, one form of HRT, to prevent chronic conditions such as coronary heart disease and ovarian cancer in postmenopausal women because the harmful effects of this drug combination were likely to exceed the chronic disease prevention benefits in most women.² Since the USPSTF recommendation, the use of HRT in the United States³ and in California⁴ has decreased.

The California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) included questions about menopause status as well as current use of HRT. In 2007 and 2009, the CWHS asked women ages 18 and older about the status of their menstrual cycle. Response options were *still having periods*, *no periods because of surgery/medical reason*, *periods irregular because of menopause*, or *no periods because of menopause*. Women who reported not having regular periods were asked when they either stopped having periods or when their periods became irregular and whether their

periods stopped because of menopause or for medical/surgical reasons. Women were also asked if they were currently using HRT. Data analyses were restricted to women ages 18 to 54 who answered the menopause questions (N= 2201), and results were weighted by age and race/ethnicity to reflect the 2000 California adult female population. Proportions were stratified by age, race/ethnicity, income, and health insurance status. Comparisons of proportions were assessed by the Chi square test. Lastly, the rate of HRT for women in 2007 was compared with the rate reported in 2009.

Timing of Menopause

- When asked about menopause, 78.8 percent of women reported still having regular periods; 9.1 percent reported that their periods had stopped because of medical/surgical reasons, 5.0 percent cited their periods were irregular because of menopause, and 7.2 percent reported that their periods had stopped because of menopause.
- Women ages 18 to 44 reported lower rates of periods stopping because of menopause (less than 1 percent) than women ages 45 to 54 (28.3 percent) (Figure 1). However, data were unreliable due to the small sample size for women ages 18 to 44 who reported their periods had stopped because of menopause

Timing of Menopause and Use of Hormone Replacement Therapy Among California Women, Ages 18 to 54, 2009

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Public Health Message:

Women who reported surgical/medical reasons for not having periods tended to be younger at the time their periods ended and were more likely to use HRT than women who entered menopause naturally. Women with surgical/medical reasons for not having periods could potentially take HRT longer than women with natural menopause; therefore, more research is needed to examine the potentially increased health risks related to HRT in this group.

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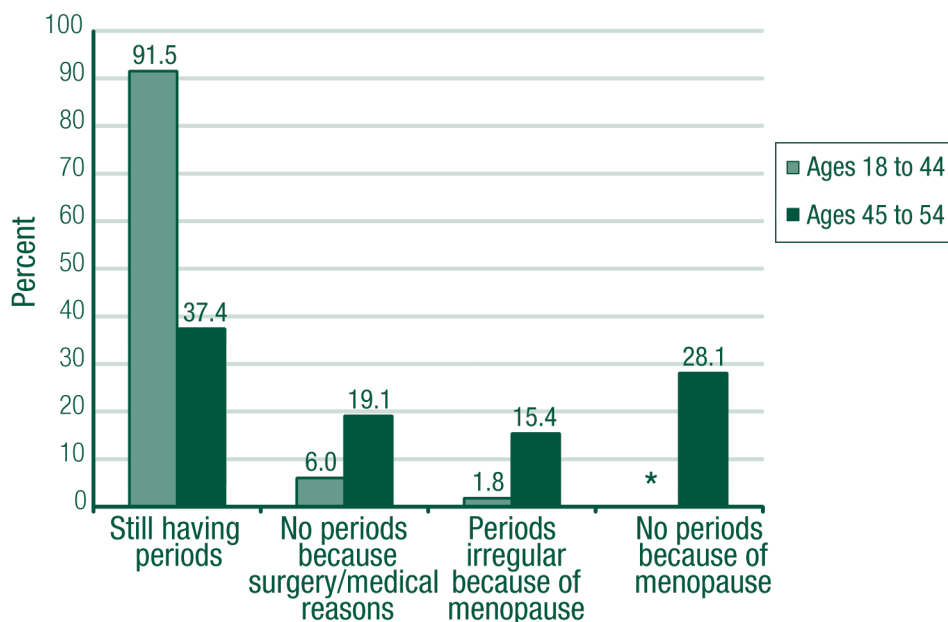
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- Hispanic women reported lower rates of being in menopause (8.5 percent) than other women. However, comparisons were unreliable due to the small sample size for African American/Black women.
- The average age of women when their periods stopped due to medical/surgical reasons was 37 (range, 16-52 years; and standard deviation was ± 8 years). However, the average age of women when their periods became irregular because of menopause was 45 (range 30-54 years; and standard deviation was ± 4 years).
- Women who reported that their periods stopped because of menopause or because of medical/surgical reasons were more likely to have insurance (87.0 percent and 83.2 percent, respectively) than women still having periods and those with irregular periods because of menopause (75.9 percent and 77.2 percent, respectively; $P < .001$).

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT)

- In 2009, 11.6 percent of women who were not having periods reported using HRT compared to 13.6 percent in 2007.
- A higher proportion of women without periods because of surgery/medical reasons reported HRT use (16.3 percent) than those whose periods stopped because of menopause (10.0 percent; Figure 2). However, comparisons were unreliable due to the small number of HRT use among women who reported irregular periods.
- No significant differences were found in HRT use by poverty level, race/ethnicity, or age.

Figure 1 **Menopause Status Among California Women Ages 18 to 54 by Age Group, 2009**



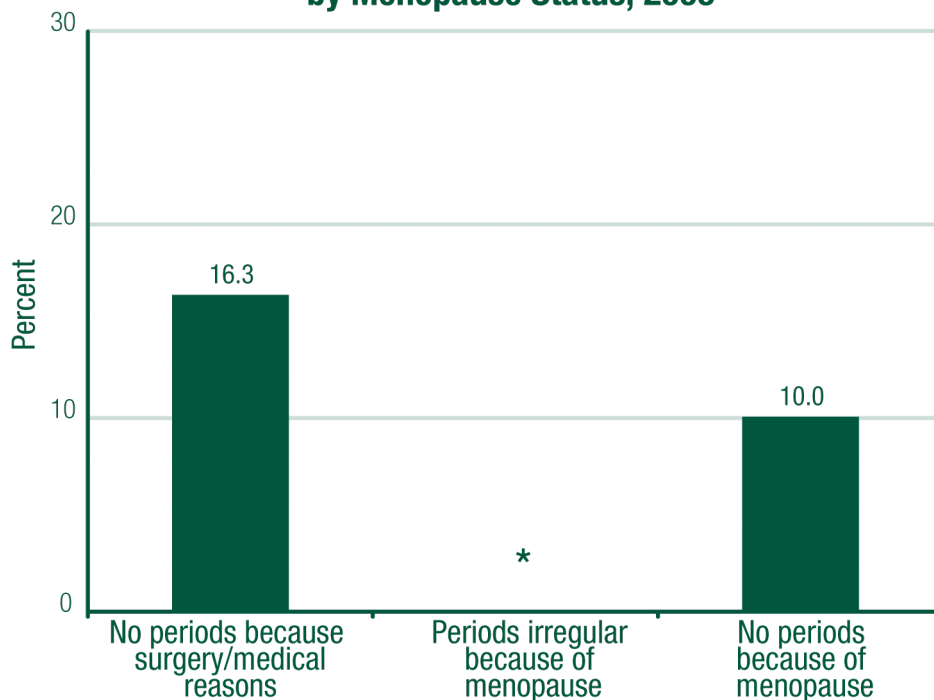
*Sample size too small for comparisons to be reliable
Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2009

*Timing of Menopause
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Figure 2

**Use of Hormone Replacement Therapy Among Women
by Menopause Status, 2009**



*Sample size too small for comparisons to be reliable

Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2009

- 1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Institutes of Health National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. Facts about menopausal hormone therapy. http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/women/pht_facts.pdf. Accessed January 2011.
- 2 U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Hormone replacement therapy for the prevention of chronic conditions in postmenopausal women. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/uspspmho.htm>. Published May 2005. Accessed March 2009.
- 3 Hersh L, Stefanick ML, Stafford RS. National use of postmenopausal hormone replacement therapy: annual trends and response to recent evidence. *JAMA*. 2004;291:47-53.
- 4 Health of California's adults, adolescents and children. Findings from California Health Interview Survey 2003 and California Health Information Survey 2001.

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